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**Henri Boulard Award 2024: Nigerian, Vietnamese and Mexican projects awarded**

   

**What do a traditional fermented food in Nigeria, a wastewater-based surveillance program in Mexico, a pediatric health platform in Vietnam, and an initiative to address the misuse of metronidazole in Nigeria have in common? These 4 local initiatives won Henri Boulard Awards 2024!**

**Sustainable, innovative, and of great clinical value!** Year after year, the Henri Boulard Awards celebrate groundbreaking work in microbiota research and its impact on human health. For the third year, the awards recognize four outstanding projects, each earning a €10,000 grant, for their contributions at local or national levels.

The 2024 Henri Boulard call for projects has been particularly fruitful with 18 applications received: 8 from Nigeria, 1 from Cameroon, 1 from Kenya, 4 from Mexico, 1 from Colombia, 2 from Vietnam and 1 from Thailand.

The applicants submitted their projects in one of the 3 categories that are:

* Microbiota and Human health (2 awards),
* Microbiota and antimicrobial resistance (1 award),
* Microbiota and environmental concerns (1 award).

Let’s discover the four winners of this new edition.

**The “Ogi’s power”: Restoring gut health in Nigeria’s vulnerable children**

One of the challenges of Nigeria is high infant mortality caused by diarrhea and worsen by hunger driven malnutrition in children. In Nigeria, diarrhea is the second leading cause of death after malaria, with an 18.8% prevalence rate and contributing to 844,000 child deaths annually. Professor Nwidu’s project aims at exploring a commonly available and inexpensive traditional fermented food globally called “Ogi” to restore gut microbiota in children suffering from diarrhea and mitigate hunger- induced malnutrition.

“*The Henri Boulard Award will assist us to support key project activities, buying of critical equipment like electrical grinder, dehydrator; buy reagents required for microbiological, biochemicals and molecular analysis.”*

**Pr Lucky Legbosi Nwidu, Nigeria**

**Wastewater-based surveillance (WWBS) in Mexico**

Looking for an alternative to monitor pathogens at a population level? Public health policies rely on tools to monitor population health, but traditional clinical methods are costly and slow, delaying epidemic detection. Wastewater-based surveillance (WWBS) offers a cost-effective alternative by analyzing pathogens in sewage, providing insights into community health. In Mexico, WWBS is not yet implemented. Dr Breton Deval’s project aims to develop and validate methods to identify antibiotic resistance genes in bacteria from a wastewater treatment plant serving 12,000 people. Using metagenomics and microbiological techniques, the study will reveal community-wide antimicrobial resistance (AMR) patterns. These findings will inform antimicrobial stewardship programs to optimize antibiotic use and curb resistance spread.

“*Beyond covering technical needs, the Henri Boulard Award highlights the significance of addressing antimicrobial resistance in wastewater and supports the development of evidence-based strategies to improve public health in Mexico.”*

**Dr Luz de Maria Breton Deval, Mexico**

**A pediatric platform dedicated to gut microbiota in Vietnam**

There is a critical gap in modern pediatric healthcare: integrating microbiome science into clinical practice. Despite the microbiome's significant impact on health, especially during early childhood development, many pediatric healthcare providers in Vietnam have yet to fully grasp how to integrate this emerging science into their daily practice. Dr Dang set up a transformative educational initiative that bridges cutting-edge microbiome research with practical clinical applications. Her team, comprising experts in pediatric gastroenterology, microbiome research, and medical education, will develop an innovative platform focused on the crucial period from pregnancy through early childhood – when microbiome establishment significantly impacts lifelong health trajectories.

“*This award represents a catalyst for transforming pediatric care in Vietnam, ultimately benefiting countless children through improved healthcare practices based on advanced microbiome science.”*

**Dr Thuy Ha Dang, Vietnam**

**Reduce the inappropriate use of metronidazole in the management of acute diarrhea in Nigeria**

The excessive dependence on metronidazole (an antibiotic and antiprotozoal) commonly used agent for the treatment of acute diarrhea in Nigeria, does not only contribute to antibiotic resistance but also have significant effects on the gut microbiota. Leaded by Dr Alle Gbenga, the project will emphasize safer and more effective alternatives, such as probiotics and necessary dietary adjustments, for preventing and managing acute diarrhea. The initiative will be based on evidence-based guidelines for diagnosing and treating acute diarrhea, aligned with standards established by international organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Gastroenterology Organization (WGO), and the European Society for Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (ESPGHAN). By raising this awareness, the campaigns will reduce the risk of antibiotic resistance, ensuring that metronidazole remains effective for critical medical needs in the future.

“*Henri Boulard Award presents an exceptional opportunity to tackle the widespread misuse of metronidazole in Nigeria which has become a significant threat to gut health.”*

**Dr Alle Gbenga, Nigeria**

**4 awards of €10,000 each**

Every year, four exceptional projects will each receive a €10,000 grant to fuel their work. Open to all healthcare professionals, the grant is distributed in two stages: €8,000 upon award approval, with an additional €2,000 one year later contingent upon the submission of a project progress report. For further information: <https://www.biocodexmicrobiotafoundation.com/henri-boulard-award>

**Biocodex Microbiota Foundation**

Since 2017, the Biocodex Microbiota Foundation has been working to improve science’s understanding of the human microbiota. Each year, the Foundation contributes to the funding of global research on microbiota via grants awarded to innovative scientific research projects. Calls for projects are regularly launched on a specific theme related to the microbiota, with the most promising projects then selected by an international scientific committee made up of independent experts.